RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOXIC LEADERSHIP AND JOB STRESS OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

HADADIAN Zagross

University of Applied Science and Technology, Zar center, Karaj, Iran

ZAREI Jamileh

University of Tehran, Psychology Department, Tehran, Iran

Abstract:

Nowadays, different levels of stress and nervousness can be found in organizations. Owing to the fact that employees spend most of their time in organizations, stress may affect the health of employees. Hence, study of stress and the factors that make stress can be a viable decision in that by eliminating these factors organizations can have healthier employees. This study is a correlation study which aims to determine the possible relationship between toxic leadership and job stress. Data collection tools including two standard questionnaires were used. The questionnaire adopted from toxic leadership (Schmidt and Hanges 2009) to measure the toxic leadership in organizations and the NIOSH Generic Job Stress Questionnaire (Hurrell and McLaney 1988) to measure the job stress. In order to analyze the data SPSS software was used. Results show that there is a significant direct relationship between toxic leadership and the job stress of employees. In other words, the more toxic leadership perceived by employees, the more job stress they feel.

Key words: Toxic leadership, job stress, knowledge workers

1. Introduction

For many years, leadership theories focused on its positive side and this led to a bias towards leadership (Pelletier 2009, Roter 2011) . But the reality is that there are also some kinds of bad leadership. These kinds of leadership are samples of non-productive behaviors in organizations. Since the extent of the effect of non-productive behavior and its consequences in the organization is very vast, the study of the effects of such behaviors in organizations seems viable. This study pertains to study the possible impact of toxic leadership on job stress among knowledge workers.

The concept of Knowledge work has been studied from different perspective and there are so many definitions for it, but still there is no consensus on the definition of knowledge work (Pyöriä 2005) .Knowledge work can be differentiated from other forms of work by its emphasis on "non-routine" way of problem solving (Reinhardt, Schmidt et al. 2011) . Knowledge workers are employees who are well educated and experienced (Cooper 2006) . For the first time, Peter Drucker, in 1959, introduced the concept of knowledge workers. Nowadays the concept of knowledge workers has highly influenced the strategy of organizations and organizations compete for recruiting these employees. Drucker explained that knowledge workers are employees who analyze available information and deliver value added information to organization. These value added information can be used in introducing new issues and solving problems. According to what discussed above, we can understand the reason why organizations are concentrating on recruiting and retaining of knowledge workers (Cooper 2006).

2. Toxic Leadership

According to Lipman-Blumen's model, toxic leadership happens when a Leader has several destructive behaviors and shows certain non-functional personal characteristics. In other words, when leaders cause serious damages to people and organizations they are toxic (Heppell 2011).
While Lippman-Blumen expanded their model based on the inter relations between leaders and followers, (Padilla, Hogan et al. 2007) added a new factor, named conductive environment and introduced the toxic triangle.

Table1.The toxic triangle(Padilla, Hogan et al. 2007)

Susceptible Followers		Conductive Environment	Destructive leaders
Conformers	Colluders	Instability	Charisma
Unmet need	Ambition	Perceived threat	Personalized power
Low core self-evaluation	Similar world view	Cultural values	Narcissism
Low maturity	Bad values	Lack of checks and balances	Negative life themes
		Ineffective institutions	Ideology of hate

In environments where there is a toxic behavior, the organization changes its policies and culture in order to support a virulent behavior (Roter 2011). Overall, it can be concluded that many factors affect the behavior of organization. Apart from the personal characteristics of the leader and follower, leader and follower relationships, environment and corporate culture is also effective (Pelletier 2009, Heppell 2011, Roter 2011). For example, some of toxic leadership behaviors in workplace can be as follows: blaming subordinates for errors, unreasonable work demands, lambasting the working ability of employees, insulting, undermining the achievements of an individual and taking account of the work of others (Heppell 2011). Even Conger argues that

charismatic leaders can unintentionally have negative effects on followers (Conger 1999). There are so many features for selfish charismatic leaders. These leaders prioritize their individual goals over organizational goals, and they cannot tolerate criticism. Moreover, these leaders make an atmosphere that no one dares to ask question and make mistakes (Pelletier 2009, Roter 2011). It is obvious that bad leadership can have negative effects on the organization and its members and it can also be harmful to health of follower (Pelletier 2009).

3.Job stress

So many factors may cause job stress, but above all factors such as high work load, shift works, poor communication between workers and managers and conflicts are the main ones (Frese and Zapf 1994, Shahid, Latif et al. 2011). These days, jobs are among the stress making issues. Norito asserts that job stress is among the main reasons of mental disorders, especially depression (Norito K 1999. Signs of job stress are divided into 3 main groups: psychological symptoms such as emotional and cognitive problems, depression, anxiety, insufficient sensitivity, isolation and mental illness (Magnavita 2000). Physical symptoms such as increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, heart disease, digestive disorders, headache and disorder of the immune system (Spigelman and Dwyer 2004, Möller, Theorell et al. 2005). Behavioral symptoms such as absenteeism (Hoogendoorn, Bongers et al. 2002), alcohol, drug and tobacco use (Hurrell and McLaney 1988). Many studies have been done about job stress, for example a research tried to study the impact of job stress on job satisfaction of employees in a Malaysian university; in this study the main stress making factors were investigated. Results of the research indicated a significant negative relationship between job stress and job satisfaction (Ahsan, Abdullah et al. 2009). Nowadays, Stress is an integral part of life. Humans experience stress in any situation and bear harmful effects of it. Stress not only affects the individual but also impede the progress in organizations. Considering the unpleasant results of job stress on individuals and organization, one may find more deep study of job stress and its creators viable.

4. Research Methodolog

The data was collected from the employees of 4 knowledge based companies. The sample consisted of 310 employees. A total of 261 questionnaires were returned. 49 questionnaires were excluded from further analysis because they were filled inappropriately. So, 212 questionnaires were used for detailed analysis.

The primary data was collected through the questionnaire adopted from toxic leadership (Schmidt 2014).Toxic leadership was measured using eight items from 15-item Toxic Leadership Scale. The result showed the Cronbach's alpha of more than 95.%

We assessed job stress with the NIOSH Generic Job Stress Questionnaire (Hurrell and McLaney 1988). This measure consists of 21 subscales assessing job stress and the additional three measures of self-esteem, job satisfaction and depressive symptoms. The Japanese version of GJSQ was developed by (Haratani, Kawakami et al. 1993), and has been shown to have high reliability and validity. In the past studies the validity and reliability of the English, Chinese and Japanese version of NIOSH Generic Job Stress Questionnaire were studied and the result showed the Cronbach's alpha of more than 65 % (Hurrell and McLaney 1988).

Research questions:
I: Is there any relationship between toxic leadership and job stress?
II: Does toxic leadership have significant capacity to influence employees' job stress?
Statistical Package for social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Pearson correlations and regressions were used to test the relationships among the variables as hypothesized.

5. Result

Table1 presents inter-correlations between the scales used in this study. As table 2 shows, Toxic leadership is significantly positively related to job stress (0.637). In addition, table 2 shows that all five scales tapping toxic leadership are positively related to job stress.

To assess which Toxic leadership dimensions were most relevant in predicting job stress, regression analyses were performed. The five toxic leadership scales explain a total of almost 42% of the variance in job stress of employees. Interestingly, whereas self-promotion and Narcissm do not have significant role in predicting job stress, Authoritarian leadership, Unpredictability and Abusive supervision are significant predictors of job stress.

Table2. Inter-correlations of scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.selfpromotion	1.000						
2.Narcissm	.702**	1.000					
3.AbusiveSupervision	.520**	.538**	1.000				
4.Unpredictability	.496**	.473**	.487**	1.000			
5.Authoritarianleadership	.347**	.280**	.285**	.313**	1.000		
6.ToxicLeadership	.797**	.778**	.756**	.768**	.588**	1.000	
7.stress	.456**	.402**	.525**	.477**	.523**	.637**	1.000
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).							

Table3. Regression results for Job stress and Toxic leadership
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.667[a]	.445	.428	.61026

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.046	.256		4.087	.000
self-promotion	.087	.088	.087	.990	.323
Narcissm	.024	.076	.027	.314	.754
Abusive Supervision	.230	.063	.268	3.651	.000
Unpredictability	.168	.057	.217	2.966	.003
Authoritarian leadership	.257	.054	.303	4.742	.000

Dependent Variable: job stress   .a

Predictors: (Constant), Authoritarian leadership, Unpredictability, Narcissism, Abusive Supervision,   .b
self-promotion

6.   Conclusion

The current sudy focuses on a specific area of toxic leadership, namely how the toxic leadership effects job stress in knowledge workers. In the literature review, Toxic leadership and Job stress were introduced and subsequently the paper aimed at finding the impact of Toxic leadership on the job stress of the knowledge workers. The first hypothesis of the paper kooked for the significance of relationship between toxic leadership and job stress. Results of the research showed that there is a significant relationship between toxic leadership and job stress. The second Hypothesis looked for finding whether Toxic leadership has significant capacity to influence employees' job stress. The result of the regression analysis showed that the five toxic leadership scales explain a total of almost 42% of the variance in job stress of employees. To sum up, we can claim that toxic leadership has significan effect on job stress of the knowledge workers. It is advisable to organizations employing knowledge workers to take care of leadership styles of their leaders in order to make sure that leaders are not using toxic leadership styles in their pattern of leadership, otherwise the perception of toxic leadership by knowledge workers may cause them to feel job stress and employees may be affected by the sympthems of job stress.The limitation of this study is that it is based on limited survey data. More research using entirely different methods and more sources of data is desirable.

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